

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 0845

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR,US

SUBJECT: SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRATION AND THE TRADE ACT

REFS: (A) MOSCOW 0232 (B) MOSCOW 0468 (C) MOSCOW 0737

1. SUMMARY: OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT IS THAT SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRATION WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE FOR THE TIME BEING AT ABOUT SAME PACE AS 1974 LEVELS AND THAT THE REGIME WILL NOT TRY TO TEACH A LESSON TO U.S. "ENEMIES OF DETENTE" BY CUTTING BACK SHARPLY ON EMIGRATION FLOW. WE BELIEVE SOVIET LEADERSHIP VIEWS THE EMIGRATION QUESTION IN THE OVERALL CONTEXT OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND WILL NOT ALLOW THE ISSUE TO SPILL OVER INTO OTHER KEY AREAS OF DETENTE POLITICS. THE REGIME APPEARS TO FEEL THAT THE CURRENT LEVEL OF EMIGRATION IS NON-DISRUPTIVE FROM AN INTERNAL STANDPOINT, AND THAT IT CAN BE KEPT WITHIN ACCEPTABLE BOUNDS THROUGH PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS AND SELECTIVE HARASSMENT OF EMIGRATION APPLICANTS. MOSCOW ACTIVIST JEWS TEND TO AGREE WITH THIS ASSESSMENT AND GENERALLY FEEL THAT EARLIER SOVIET STATEMENTS AND RECENT REJECTION OF TRADE ACT PROVISIONS HAVE NOT CHANGED THEIR SITUATION DRASTICALLY. THEY, TOO, SEE THE EMIGRATION QUESTION AS CONNECTED WITH DETENTE ON A BROAD SCALE IN THE EYES OF THE REGIME. END SUMMARY.

2. DESPITE THE SOVIET REJECTION OF THE PROVISIONS OF
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THE TRADE ACT, WE BELIEVE THERE ARE STRONG REASONS FOR

THE SOVIETS TO ALLOW JEWISH EMIGRATION TO CONTINUE AT ABOUT THE SAME LEVEL AS 1974 (AROUND 1600 TO 1800 PER MONTH). FIRST, THEY HAVE CAREFULLY AVOIDED PUBLICLY LINKING SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRATION WITH TRADE, AND A SUDDEN SHARP CUTBACK IN THE EMIGRATION FLOW WOULD GIVE THE LIE TO THAT POSITION AND TEND TO PROVE THAT THEY, INDEED, HAD ALLOWED INTERFERENCE IN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS EARLIER, WHEN THEY FOUND IT IN THEIR INTERESTS TO DO SO. SECONDLY, WHILE SOME IN THE REGIME MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO TEACH SENATOR JACKSON AND OTHER "ENEMIES OF DETENTE" A LESSON, THEY WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY NOT WANT TO ESTABLISH A LINK BETWEEN THE EMIGRATION ISSUE AND BROADER ISSUES OF U.S.-SOVIET DETENTE AND COOPERATION SUCH AS ARMS CONTROL, SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION AND EXCHANGES. THIRDLY, SOVIET COMMENTATORS HAVE ALREADY WELCOMED THE PRESIDENT'S AND THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENTS ABOUT THE CONTINUATION OF DETENTE AND HAVE NOTED OUR EXPRESSED DESIRE TO TRY TO FIND SOME FLEXIBILITY IN THE AREA OF TRADE. AS LONG AS THERE IS A CHANCE THAT SOMETHING MAY BE WORKED OUT WITH CONGRESS ON U.S.-SOVIET TRADE, THE SOVIETS WILL PROBABLY BE CAUTIOUS NOT TO UNDERMINE THE POSSIBILITY OF A FUTURE COMPROMISE BY FORCING THEIR U.S. CRITICS INTO EVEN TOUGHER POSITIONS. FINALLY, WHILE THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY NO GENERAL DESIRE AMONG THE LEADERSHIP TO INCREASE JEWISH EMIGRATION, THE SOVIETS HAVE PROBABLY FOUND THE 1974 EMIGRATION LEVELS NOT TO BE PARTICULARLY DISRUPTIVE IN TERMS OF INTERNAL SECURITY.

3. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY NOTED, OUR JEWISH SOURCES TELL US THAT THE SOVIET PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN TO SLOW DOWN EMIGRATION HAS HAD SOME SUCCESS AMONG POTENTIAL EMIGRATION APPLICANTS. GENERAL CONCERN ABOUT THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN ISRAEL, WHICH HAS BEEN REINFORCED BY THE SOVIET MEDIA, SEEMS TO HAVE CAUSED A NUMBER OF SOVIET JEWS HOLDING INVITATIONS FROM ISRAEL TO DELAY THEIR FORMAL APPLICATIONS. THE MEDIA BOMBARDMENT ON ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN THE WEST HAS ALSO BEEN SOMEWHAT SUCCESSFUL, ALTHOUGH TO A LESSER EXTENT, IN DISCOURAGING SOME WHO HAVE NO INTENTION OF

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SETTLING IN ISRAEL. THROUGH THE USE OF PROPAGANDA, SELECTED REFUSALS TO CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF APPLICANTS ON "SECURITY" GROUNDS, AND AN OCCASIONAL SCARE CASE, SUCH AS THE SHTERN TRIAL IN VINNITSA AND THE LEVIYEV CASE IN MOSCOW (REFTELS A AND B), THE REGIME HAS BEEN ABLE TO KEEP POTENTIAL EMIGRANTS OFF BALANCE AND UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHAT AWAITS THEM AFTER APPLYING TO LEAVE. WHILE MANY OF THESE CURRENT HESITATORS

WILL EVENTUALLY TRY TO LEAVE ANYWAY, FROM THE REGIME'S STANDPOINT THE POLICY HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF SPACING OUT EMIGRATION AND KEEPING IT WITHIN COMFORTABLE BOUNDS.

4. SOVIET POLICY HAS SEEMED AIMED AT TRYING TO BRING ABOUT A SITUATION IN WHICH THEY COULD LEGITIMATELY CLAIM THAT THE NUMBER OF EXIT APPLICATIONS BASICALLY CORRESPONDS TO THE NUMBER OF EMIGRANTS, WITH A SMALL BACKLOG DUE ONLY TO ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSING. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH FOREIGN VISITORS, SOVIET LEADERS HAVE CONSISTENTLY SAID THAT THERE IS NO GREAT GAP BETWEEN APPLICATIONS AND ACTUAL EMIGRANTS (SEE REFTEL C FOR MOST RECENT EXAMPLE). SINCE EMIGRATION HAS CONTINUED, ALTHOUGH AT REDUCED LEVELS FROM THE PEAK YEAR OF 1973, AND SINCE INVITATIONS FROM ISRAEL CONTINUE TO BE RECEIVED AND RENEWED, JEWISH EMIGRATION WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT DRY UP IN THE NEAR FUTURE, UNLESS THE REGIME WANTS IT TO. IF THE AUTHORITIES SHOULD WANT TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF MONTHLY EMIGRATION TO ESTABLISH A LOWER STANDARD TO GAUGE THEIR PERFORMANCE IN THIS REGARD, THEY WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY DO THIS GRADUALLY SO AS NOT TO CALL ATTENTION TO SUCH A TACTIC.

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5. MOSCOW JEWS AT THIS POINT SEEM TO HOLD BASICALLY TO THE VIEW THAT THE SOVIETS WILL CONTINUE THE PRESENT RATE OF EMIGRATION. IN A NUMBER OF CONVERSATIONS AFTER SABBATH SERVICES AT MOSCOW'S CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE JANUARY 18, EMBOFF FOUND JEWS WARY ABOUT RECENT

DEVELOPMENTS, BUT NOT PARTICULARLY PANICKED, AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED. KNOWLEDGEABLE JEWISH ACTIVISTS FELT THAT SOVIET ACTION WAS BASED ON NEED TO SHOW PUBLICLY THAT SOVIET UNION RAN ITS OWN INTERNAL SHOW AND COULD NOT BE BULLIED. SOME FELT THAT SOVIETS MAY HAVE BEEN MORE FORTHCOMING IF THERE WAS MORE IN THE TRADE ACT FOR THEM, BUT FEW WERE CRITICAL OF CONGRESSIONAL ACTION; THEY STILL SEE SENATOR JACKSON AS THEIR STANDARD BEARER. SOME WERE HESITANT TO PREDICT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN ON EMIGRATION QUESTION, BUT MOST ACTIVISTS FELT THAT REGIME WOULD NOT TAKE DIRECT VINDICTIVE ACTION. GENERAL VIEW WAS THAT EMIGRATION QUESTION IS STILL CONNECTED WITH DETENTE, WHICH REGIME WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE, AND THAT SOVIET REJECTION OF TRADE ACT PROVISIONS HAS NOT CHANGED SITUATION OF EMIGRATION-MINDED JEWS DRASTICALLY. THUS FAR EARLIER SOVIET STATEMENTS ON TRADE AND EMIGRATION AND RECENT REJECTION HAVE NOT BROUGHT VISIBLE CHANGES, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL NOTED THAT LOCAL OFFICIALS OUTSIDE MOSCOW COULD POSSIBLY ON THEIR OWN TAKE MORE RIGID POSITIONS IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS. BUSINESS AS USUAL ATTITUDE IS ILLUSTRATED BY COMMENTS OF ONE OF LEADING ACTIVISTS, SON OF WELL-KNOWN
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PROFESSOR VENYAMIN LEVICH, WHO TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE WAS CALLED IN TO VISA OFFICE DAY BEFORE AND TOLD AGAIN THAT HE COULD LEAVE FOR ISRAEL IN MARCH. EXCEPT FOR SOME UNCONFIRMED RUMORS, NO ONE PRESENT KNEW OF ANY LINKAGE BY LOCAL OFFICIALS OF EMIGRATION REFUSALS WITH TRADE ACT REJECTION AFTER SOVIET POSITION WAS MADE PUBLIC IN LATE DECEMBER.
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